

# Celebrate the end of MINIMALISM

Lockdown has done strange things to our relationship with our homes.

Months of WFH and gazing at the same four walls have left many yearning for a change of scenery. Travel restrictions have scrunched itchy feet. We're starting to eye up the paintbrush and consider splashing our drab walls with a riot of glorious colour, seeking ways to inject some of that buzz and excitement usually found by being out there in the world into our domestic space.

Perhaps that's why the New London Fabulous design movement is currently making the global spotlight. Led by a core group of four UK-based designers — Camille Walala, Yinka Kofi, Miriam Myersonagh, and Adam Nathaniel Furman — the fun-good collective is all about celebrating colour, pattern and cultural diversity. Their vibrant style can be found brightening up the usually grey, gritty streets of London and beyond, with street crossings transformed into rainbow-hued walkways, concrete railway bridges popping to life with frats-worthy pink panels and splitting murals using kaleidoscopic patterns to decorate street corners.

According to Furman, the poster boy for the get-happy-design movement, for a number of years London has been attracting a high concentration of creatives working, with bold print and bright back. It's just that now, suddenly, the rest of the world is catching on.

"There's those of us who have always been interested in colour and pattern and then there's the lockdown effect," says the artist and designer, via a Zoom call from his grandmother's home. "I think that conceivably, the public are crying out for something with a bit of joy in it."

Furman's work includes busy-patterned pedestrian walkways illuminating the streets of Coventry and a cheerful ceramic mural for a London hospital's maternity ward. His Gainsborough installation at London Design Festival in 2017 was the outstanding hit of the show, with crowds playfully engaging with the space and queuing up to be snapped in front of it. However, it's his Nagasaki Apartment, in the heart of Tokyo, that really offers up a master class in how to use colour effectively.

The brief was to bring light into the poky and low-ceilinged flat, originally built in the early 60s. After knocking through walls and raising the ceiling, Furman, who is of Japanese, Argentine and Israeli heritage, got to work on transforming the space with colour, using a gorgeous palette of bubblegum pink and powder blue, dotted with streaks of ecru, lemon and lime.

His colour choices were influenced by evocative memories of visiting Japan

Zoey Goto talks to the designers bringing colour back into our lives

throughout his childhood, including its pastel-coloured bathrooms. "Visiting Tokyo in the 90s, I got to witness the gender-bending Japanese culture. The apartment is a mash-up of 60s Japanese totems and bathroom-memé Hello Kitty," he says.

When designing your own domestic space, don't be deterred by a perceived lack of formal art training, the designer emphasises. Despite studying at London's prestigious Architectural Association School of Architecture, Furman says that there was actually very little talk of colour, so everything he knows has been learnt intuitively. "It's just constant repetition. With each project, I play and experiment. If you own your home, it's really okay to make a mistake, you can just repaint it later. The colour as a form of expression and even if it's terrible, at least you're making memories," he laughs.

Over in North London, artist and designer Myersonagh has been proving that while we certainly can't paint the town red, we can most certainly paint our living rooms red (or orange, pink or yellow, for that matter).

Myersonagh is a born-and-bred Londoner, whose distinctive large-scale murals, often incorporating graphic text and flashes of neon, explore how we can use words, colour and pattern to make our urban environments sing. Last year she created her eye-catching *Love at First Sight* installation in Aberdeen, Scotland. Her pavilion, part stage, the surrounding structure invited people to fall back in love with their city, while also honouring the place where her own parents had fallen in love at first sight.

Although her work usually focuses on creating engaging experiences in the public realm, when the bulk of her commissions were cancelled during quarantine Myersonagh channelled her creative energy into her living/workspace, completing domestic projects that had previously taken a back seat. "I thought this is the time to do something for myself to improve my living space — to start to love it again and for my own wellbeing," Myersonagh says.

Stage one involved decorating the facade of her roof terrace with a bold, geometric mural. Next, her floor and parterre moved to her library room,

Miriam Myersonagh's roof terrace.

adorned the built-in bookshelves in a gentle gradient of shades. The stairwell room is completed with floorboards stained with diamond shapes, sealed with a hardwearing clear varnish and a floplac that takes center stage, bursting with a pattern of colour. The whole process has been lovingly documented, including time-lapse demonstrations, for her Instagram followers (@myersonagh).

So having completed her own rainbow renovation, what advice can Myersonagh offer to others trying with the idea? "Colour is difficult to use but the benefits are amazing." Natural light and the size of the space can all play an unexpected role in how the final colour looks, she notes. "It is good to live with colour for a while. It's very powerful and can change your mood, not always in a positive way!"

Hypo-fun it may be but beware of writing off the New London Fabulous movement as frivolous. The switched-on designers are well aware of the links between our built environment and its impact on our mental health, especially in urban areas where city-dwellers are thought to have a 40 per cent increased risk of depression.

French-born designer Walala is well-versed in the relationship between design and wellbeing. In 2017 she worked on a project for the Park Royal Centre for Mental Health in London, creating a vibrant flaming collage to transform the previously sterile public corridors. Walala's aim was to create a space where patients could feel pride in their surroundings, "to show them we were giving them love and interest". The feedback was overwhelmingly encouraging, as is generally the case with Walala's work.

"There's a lot of colour and positivity in what I do," she says. "Often when I'm painting a project, I'll have people walk up to give me really positive feedback. It's sustained why I want to spread joy on the streets and in cities."

Walala has also spread up a generic office block in London's Old Street area with an explosion of colour-associated signage. *Rocked Down Come True*, the mural stands out as a beacon of optimistic creativity in this urban jungle and never fails to bring a smile to my face when I pass it, doing the rounds of my local area.

"Art can have a huge impact on how an area looks and feels," remarks Walala, who originally trained in textiles. "It feels really great when you hear that someone is taking more pride in where they live."

Coronavirus has also given us a heightened awareness of the importance of public spaces, as we are all spending more time in our immediate neighbourhoods. Says Walala, "This is a time when we really need community. I want to see my art to impact others, to apply colour and pattern to bring joy."

In these strange times we find ourselves in, colour-rich design is bringing good vibes back on to our streets and into our homes. ■





## Get the New London Fabulous look

**1 Adorn Nathaniel Furness: Floor Slippy Rugs**  
Designed by New London Fabulous' very own Furness, the Mediterranean collection of rugs is described by the designer as 'joyously delectable'. Made from tufted New Zealand wool, the colourways are sure to make any home sing. **£2590+** International shipping. [adorn.co.uk](http://www.adorn.co.uk)

**2 Making Living Lovely Book**  
Design studio SLG know a thing or two about **RGB** to do colour and they share their wisdom in their new book entitled *Making Living Lovely: Free Your Home with Creative Design*. Packed with hands-on practical tips and hacks, it is the authority on how to create stylish interiors. **RRP £10**, published by Thames and Hudson.

**3 Retro Design Wallpaper from Gair & Rowse**  
Bringing both vintage vibes and a flash of colour, the *Have Gone* wallpaper in turquoise and purple is ideal for adding personality to a hallway or for a statement wall. **£275 per roll + International shipping.** [retrodecorations.com](http://retrodecorations.com)

**4 Conille Walshe: Carnival Print**  
East London gallery Nelly Duff stock a selection of limited edition Walshe prints, including a hot foil and screenprint called *Carnival*, which is hand-signed by the artist. **£244 + International shipping.** [nellyduff.com](http://nellyduff.com)

**5 Briggallave: New Town Tile collection**  
The humble tile has been given a post-modern makeover, thanks to Furness teaming up with the Italian ceramic manufacturer *Briggallave*. The nostalgic-based tiles fit together like a jigsaw and come with either a ribbed or smooth surface. **£125 per sq m + International shipping.** [briggallave.co.uk](http://briggallave.co.uk)

**6 60+ Cushions from Gair & Rowse**  
Inspired by the graphics of the 60s, digitally printed cotton cushion covers are the perfect way to flirt with the New London Fabulous look, without making a permanent commitment. **£18 + International shipping.** [retrodecorations.com](http://retrodecorations.com)

## How to add colour: ASK THE EXPERTS

**From left: Adorn Nathaniel Furness's transformation of the Hogarth's apartment in Tokyo. Work in progress on the Highgate Project Mans in London.**

Jordan Grace and Russell Whitehead are the duo behind the hip interior design studio SLG. Their Perry Park home studio space received a *Decor* Award nomination and their signature style combines a masterful use of colour with clever vintage references. They are also authors of the new book *Making Living Lovely*.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to introduce colour into the home?  
If you're nervous, go for a colour that you already feel really comfortable with, something you enjoy wearing or the colour of your favourite flowers, for example. It's a good idea to dip your toes in the water with a colour by introducing a few accessories or a rug. It's incredible how impactful a bold new shade can be on a shelf, or how a joyful rug fires up a space.

How can you create a harmonious space when working with colour and pattern?  
We believe in creating thoughtful and journeys through the home via design. On that journey there is plenty of room for moments of excess and wonder.

but we always keep an eye on the throughline to keep that harmonious hold. It can be a single colour, material or repeated motif.

If you want a serene, calming space, make the fun and clash happen elsewhere. This will even serve to make the calm space feel calmer as a result. A transient space, like a hallway, is often a great place to experiment with clash, because you don't linger in those spaces, but they make great first impressions. Beware ahead of clash — when used thoughtfully, within a design story, it can enliven the total.

**Below: A glimpse of Hypercouch.**

